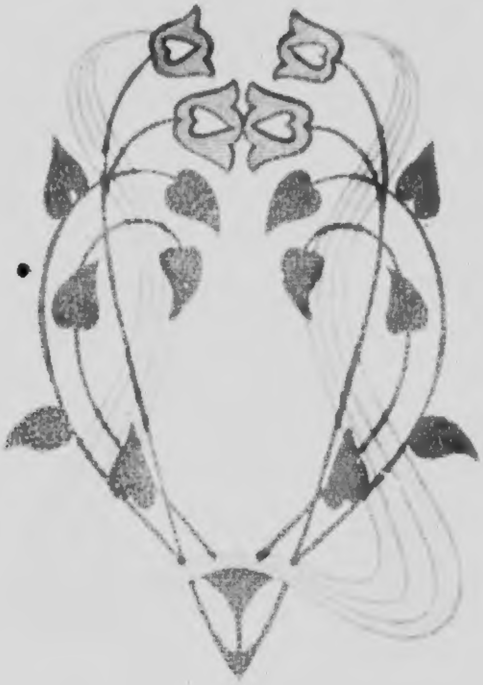
Porcelain



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HAMILTON AGENTS FOR THE
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Pouyat China.

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—FOR
DECORATING

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Then beauty is its own excuse for being."

* * *

To the Artists of Canada:

We beg to draw your attention to our very complete stock of White China for Decorating. It is our endeavour to not only keep all the staple articles, but also the very newest productions from all the famous potteries. We will be pleased to furnish a Catalogue with Price-List to our customers on request. This Catalogue will be ready for mailing about August 1st.

Yours respectfully,

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PORCELAIN

ANCIENT
& MODERN

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THE average denizen of the civilized world devotes perhaps an hour and a half or two hours a day to the pleasures of the table, so that by middle life he has spent four years or so in the contemplation of plates and dishes—observing them, handling them, and passing them about.

Unlike table linen, silver-ware, and other things intimately associated with the daily routine, the potter's handiwork does not reveal its real character to the inattentive observer. The peculiar shapes, colors, finish, and all the features that distinguish the various makes and qualities are apparent only to those who have taken some pains to acquire special information.

The study of ceramics is a fascinating occupation, but the very magnitude of the subject deters busy men and women from attempting it.

This consideration prompts us to publish in this handy form a little of the history of porcelain manufacture, and some information concerning the different classes of china ware. It is very brief, and devoid of technical terms, and relates chiefly to the finer grades of porcelain made in France.

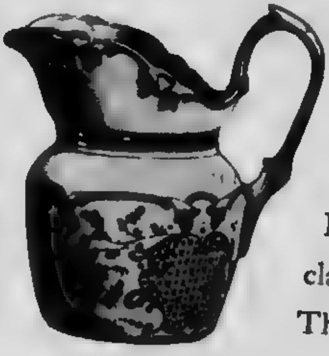
It is a common belief that all pottery is made of clay, but the truth is that table ware fashioned from clay alone, is never beautiful nor durable—never harmonizes with the fine character of modern houses and table furnishings. Porcelain is composed in part of clay, but also of other elements which impart to it the distinguish-

ing characteristics of density, translucence, and the clear ringing quality by which it may always be identified. Porcelain has a beautiful, white, homogeneous body, is quite impervious to water and is not affected by frost.

We may say in general that porcelain is divided into two groups, one called *Pâte-Tendre,* the soft or artificial porcelain, and the other *Pâte-Dure*—hard or Kaolinic porcelain.

The soft porcelain is again divided into two classes: The one—*A-Fritte* or *Pâte-Tendre Francaise* is composed of sand and lime, which fuse and melt at a moderately high temperature, forming a body

resembling glass, the vitrification of which is incomplete. This is the china which was made at Sèvres during the reign of Louis XV. It was of a rich, milky appearance, and from this delicate body were made many beautiful pieces in rich color effects, now of inestimable value.



English soft porcelain is composed of clay, sand, and phosphate of lime. The latter ingredient being prepared from calcined bones, has given the name "Bone China" to this particular porcelain. It is produced in England, Germany, and in the United States.

The soft porcelains are often extremely beautiful and have perhaps but one ob-

jectionable feature. The glaze, containing lead for its basis, is soft and yielding, so that all of the so-called soft porcelains become defaced in ordinary use by scratching and cutting with the knife.

Hard porcelain is produced by a much more difficult and scientific mixture of elements. The principal of these is Kaolin, a white, plastic, infusible clay. The other component parts are *feldspar*, a white mineral fusible only at high temperature, and *quartz* or *flint* which by itself is neither plastic nor fusible. When perfectly compounded, the hard porcelain is covered with a brilliant vitrified glaze of quartz and feldspar, so hard that a diamond will scarcely cut it;

and it can never be marred or cut in ordinary use.

The famous Sèvres China, formerly a soft porcelain, is now made by this process. Chinese porcelain, examples of which have been purchased at fabulous prices by collectors and museums, also belong to this group.

BRIEF HISTORY

Of Porcelain Manufacture

IT is generally agreed that porcelain was first made in China, about 200 B.C. It attained its highest perfection in the fifteenth century, then began to decline, but again came brilliantly to the front in the seventeenth century, ending, however, in complete decadence during the last half of the eighteenth century.

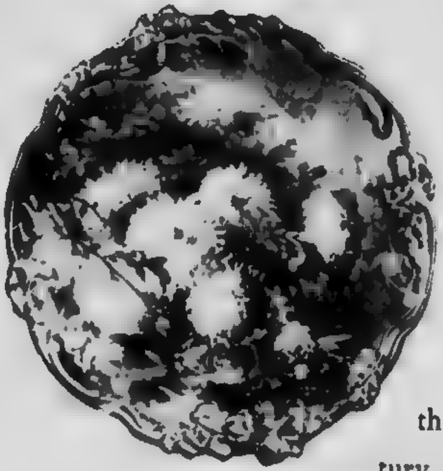
When the Portugese and Dutch introduced Chinese porcelain into Europe in the fifteenth century, it was regarded with something like superstitious awe, and wonderful were the stories told of its miraculous properties and the difficulties of its manufacture. For example, we find

a learned Italian author, Gui Panciroli, making these wise comments: "Past generations have not seen porcelain which is really a mass composed of plaster, eggs, shells of marine locusts and such like. This being well kneaded and mixed together, is hidden in the ground by the head of a family, whose secret is known only to his children; and there it remains *for eighty years* without being brought to light; after which his heirs remove it, and finding it appropriate to some work, fashion it into those special vases, so beautiful to the eye in shape and color that architects cannot detect any defects in them. These vases have such wonderful properties, that if poison be put into them, *they immediately burst asunder*. He

who has buried this matter never sees it again, but leaves it for his children, nephews or heirs, as a rich treasure, on account of the benefit they may derive from it; and it is much more valuable than gold."

Owing to this fantastic misconception of the nature of Chinese porcelain, it was not the potter, but the alchemist, who strove to produce similar material.

The first attempt to imitate Chinese porcelain was made in Florence during the last half of the sixteenth century. The result was a soft porcelain now known as Medici porcelain. The great house of Medici had an enormous influence in the development of the potter's art. Catharine De Medici was the first patron of the great French genius Pallissy, a man of humble origin, who



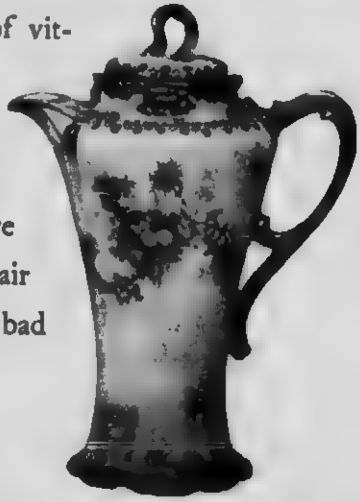
produced singularly beautiful faience by methods so secretly pursued that its manufacture practically ceased with his death.

A hundred years later, toward the end of the seventeenth century, we find Chinese porcelain being successfully imitated in France. At Rouen, Orleans, and more extensively at St. Cloud (1695), factories were established and a sort of artificial china produced that enjoyed great favor for a time, and is to-day much sought for by collectors. Other factories were established at Chantilly (1725), Mennery (1735), Vincennes (1740), and later at Sceaux and at Bourg-La-Reine.

St. Cloud porcelain has been described as of a milky-white color, soft and warm in texture, very transparent, very tastefully and carefully decorated with lambrequins and arabesques in the pure French style. This celebrated factory was burned in 1773, and was never rebuilt.

The Chantilly works were founded in 1725 by Cignaire Ciron, under the patronage of Louis Henri, Prince de Conde. The earlier products now in existence are remarkable for the beauty and whiteness of the paste, and for the perfect though simple decorations. It is interesting to know that on Chantilly porcelain, especially on the earlier productions, the glaze is stanniferous or opaque, instead of vitreous or translucent.

It would seem that the next forward step in the development of porcelain manufacture in France is due primarily to a pair of workmen noted chiefly for "bad

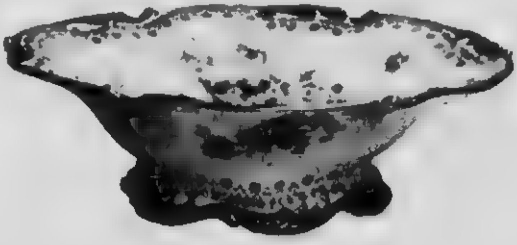


conduct" and *lack of skill.* These were the brothers Du Bois, employees first of the works at St. Cloud and afterward at Chantilly, from which place they had been expelled, when (in 1774) they succeeded in interesting the Marquis Orry de Fulvey, brother of the Comptroller General of France, in a scheme to establish a porcelain manufactory under his direction. The King became interested in this project, and in spite of repeated failures to accomplish results, the pertinacity and courage of de Fulvey and the continued support of the King kept the factory in operation for several years, until one of the workmen (Gravant) supplanted the Du Bois brothers in the management.

Gravant, in 1745, produced work of sufficient merit to insure the future success of the estab-

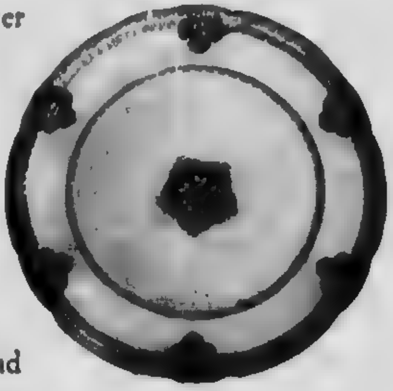
lishment. A company was formed, composed principally of "Fermiers Generaux," and a royal subsidy was granted; the King, the Dauphin and the Marquise De Pompadour taking a great interest in the work. From this time forward porcelain became the popular fashion. The factory continued under various auspices, always with royal patronage, until the business increased so largely that in 1756 the plant was greatly extended and removed to Sèvres. In 1759 the King became sole proprietor.

It had been the ambition of this establishment to produce ultimately the "Pâte Dure" or



hard porcelain, of which the Chinese had preserved the secret so many years. Macquer, the chemist of the establishment, believed that Kaolin, the necessary ingredient of hard porcelain, existed in France, and this element was eventually discovered at St. Yriex, near Limoges, by Madam Darnet, wife of a poor country surgeon. A piece of the first Kaolin discovered has been preserved in the museum at Sèvres, having been sent to Macquer by the Archbishop of Bordeaux, together with a little statuette of Bacchus which he had made with a portion of the Kaolin. This discovery enabled the factory to realize its ambitious aims, and from 1769 hard porcelain con-

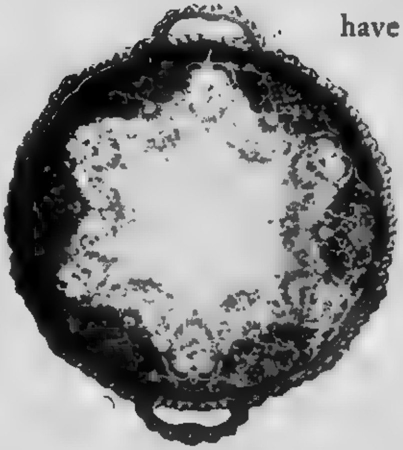
tinued to gain in popularity and importance, and gradually supplanted the soft porcelain. In 1789 Sèvres had no rival, and its products commanded the admiration of all Europe. The Sèvres productions have ever since been the glory of France and the despair of competitors.



We may now refer briefly to a personage who stands out in some relief among the experimenters, workmen, aristocrats and others identified with the early history of porcelain manufacture. This is Pierre Pouyat, a man of considerable prominence; a Consul in 1743, and a manufacturer of faience at St. Yriex in 1760. Specimens of the first work of the Pouyat factory are occasionally seen, and are to be identified by the imprint—a capital "P."

While the Pouyat factory was in operation, the discovery of Kaolin at St. Yriex opened to M. Pouyat a larger field of operations. He immediately bought tracts containing beds of the finest quality of Kaolin at Barre, Marcognac and Chanteloube. This purchase laid the real foundation of the Pouyat institution of the present day.

At that time, Paris being the best market for china, there were four or five factories established there. M. Pouyat purchased the principal one, located at La Courtille, near Fontaine du Roi. The productions of this factory must then have been large, and remarkable in character, for we find among the papers of Madame Du Barry a receipt for 30,000 livres, or about $15,000, for a life size porcelain bust.



Having perfected the methods of compounding ingredients, and possessing unlimited supplies of the best Kaolin, the founder of the Pouyat house, not content with the mere imitation of Chinese porcelain, began the introduction of distinctive French characteristics in forming and decorating the Pouyat productions. His success in appealing to cultured taste was immediate and lasting. The "Barbeaux" pattern of La Courtille, produced at this period, became celebrated; and specimens now known as "Old Pouyat" are at this day eagerly sought for.

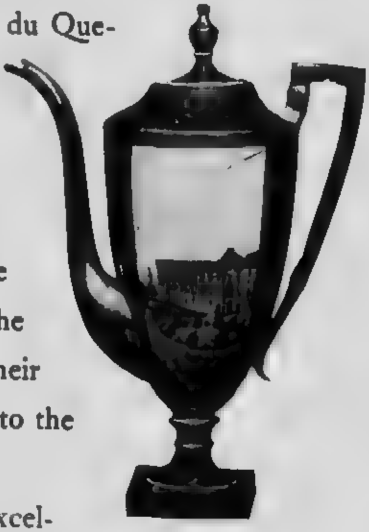
The Pouyat factory at La Courtille was also the first to employ *grand feu* colors, not only the famous blue, but violet also, and a brown known as *écaille*.

The coulage, or casting process adopted at Sèvres in 1814, was known and practised at the Pouyat factory as early as 1791.

M. Pouyat's son received the Cross of the Legion of Honor in 1830 for his valuable services to French Ceramic Art. Six years after the bestowal of this high testimonial he died, at the age of eighty-six, leaving the business in the capable hands of J. Pouyat, a son who had long been his partner and collaborateur.

Another Pouyat factory was established in 1842 at Limoges. Here were gathered a select company of skilled, intelligent artisans, and the work of this establishment speedily acquired fame and distinction. Besides a great variety of artistic shapes in table ware, numerous specimens of monumental

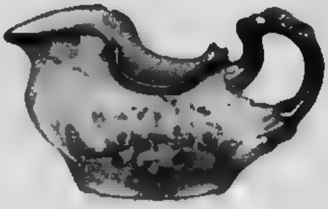
decorations bear the stamp of the Limoges factory; notably a series of Corinthian Capitals for the church of St. Pierre du Queryoix, two of which are now exhibited in the Limoges Museum of Ceramics.



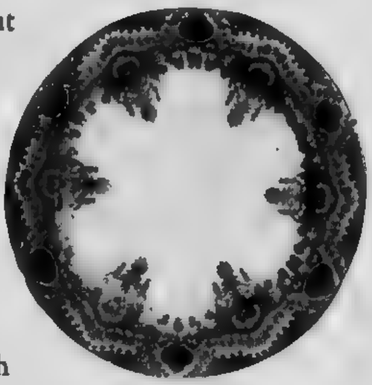
Emile, Louis and Eugene, sons of J. Pouyat, succeeded the latter in the management of the great Pouyat interests, and their regime brings the account down to the present date.

Relying upon the established excellence of the Pouyat ware an exhibit of pure white china, unadorned by the decorator's art, was shown at the London Exposition of 18 , and again at Paris in 1862, where first prizes were awarded. These productions embodied the always distinguishing features of

Pouyat China—purity of body and glaze, and the highest artistic achievement in design. A dinner service of plain white china modeled by Comodera, excited peculiar interest at that time. Special attention was attracted by the lightness and thin body of the cups which won for them the distinguishing name of "Tasses Mousseline" —since become a generic name for extremely thin cups. At the Paris Exposition of 1878 the first prize was awarded in recognition of these qualities.



White ware is cited as best adapted to show the beautiful body and glaze of Pouyat China, but as a matter of course the excellence of this ware extends also to the decorated pieces. One famous specialty is an underglaze (grand feu) Sèvres blue, its peculiar quality being attributed by the chemist to the quality of the clay, which is perfectly adapted to the assimilation of oxide cobalt.

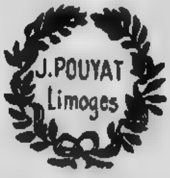


It may be said, in closing, that Pouyat China exhibits in the highest attainable measure the qualities that make hard porcelain the finest ceramic product in the world. Indeed, it is hardly an exaggeration to call this ware the nearest approach of man's handiwork to absolute perfection, for every worthy piece is an embodiment of artistic grace and beauty, in a material that remains unalterable through ages, resisting as no other work of man does in like degree the corrosive action of time.

POUYAT CHINA

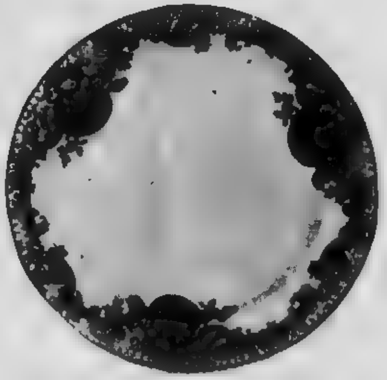
may always be identified by these marks:

ON DECORATED



ON WHITE

J. P.
L.
FRANCE.



THE editors of the foregoing short treatise on porcelain wish to add these few words:

The BEST French China, when made moderately thin and light, is at the same time strongly adhesive and NOT more liable to "chip" than other productions. There are, however, cheap productions in thin fancy French ware which inevitably have this defect, and upon this basis of fact certain interested dealers do not scruple to condemn ALL French China as unduly fragile.

The persistent efforts to create such an impression invariably emanate from those controlling

certain other grades of china, and their deliberate purpose is to deceive, in order that the exorbitant profits of monopoly may be maintained.

We desire to state most emphatically that the dense, substantial body of Pouyat China makes it less liable to "chip" than any other thin china, and quite as durable as ANY porcelain, hard or soft.

Buyers of china ware may place absolute reliance upon these statements.

J. POUYAT,

Limoges, France.

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